

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: October 10, 2013

Agenda Item: Proposed Fishing Access Site on Lower Big Spring Creek south of Lewistown (R4)

Division: Fisheries

Action Needed: Final

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 10 minutes

Background

On May 1, 2013, the Fish & Wildlife Commission endorsed the department's request to pursue acquisition of approximately 21 acres of land for the purpose of providing fishing access to Lower Big Springs Creek near Lewistown. The parcel was appraised at \$250,000 and the owner, Bank of the Rockies, has agreed to sell the parcel for \$188,000 and would donate the remainder of the value. The department is asking the commission to approve final acquisition of this parcel. Big Spring Creek access sites are a high priority in Region 4. Big Spring Creek access sites are a high priority in Region 4. The creek is too small for float fishing and too large and/or deep for extensive wading, which means that sites are needed throughout the drainage in order to provide public access to the various reaches of the creek. This particular site would also enable FWP to initiate the second phase of a stream restoration project and would allow for the expansion of the Lewistown City Trail network.

Public Involvement Process & Results

The department prepared an environmental assessment on acquiring this parcel and received 18 comments. Support for this proposal was high (16 comments). Opponents expressed concern with the cost of the parcel.

Alternatives and Analysis

The commission could decide not to purchase this parcel on Lower Big Springs Creek. Public fishing access to this section of the river would be limited due to the difficulty of staying within the high-water mark and FWP wouldn't be able to conduct Phase 2 of the stream restoration project.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the commission approve final acquisition of this parcel, after which the department would proceed to the State Land Board for approval. This parcel would enhance public access to Big Springs Creek and provide for optimum routing of the stream restoration project. The parcel would also expand the Lewistown City Trail network and benefit the community.

Proposed Motion

I move that the commission authorize FWP to purchase approximately twenty-one acres of land for the purpose of providing fishing access to Lower Big Springs Creek.